

Draft
Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)
Legislative and Public Policy Committee Meeting Minutes
February 3, 2020

Members Present

Amy Porterfield, Chair
Bob Kresmer
Ted Chittenden
Ed House
George Martinez
Brian Dulude

Members Absent

Allan Curry
Donald Porterfield

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Call to Order and Introductions

Amy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm in the RSA Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Approval of January 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Bob Kresmer moved to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2020 Legislative and Public Policy Committee meeting. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The committee approved the minutes by unanimous voice vote.

ILB Funding Increase Discussion

Amy Porterfield stated she developed a draft Independent Living Blind (ILB) Funding Increase Fact Sheet and inquired whether committee members had any suggested changes before submitting the Fact Sheet to the Full Council for review. Ed House stated the first paragraph referenced Title 7 Chapter 1, Part B funds and noted the wording indicated there were funds available for Independent Living (IL) services. Ed House stated the Fact Sheet later referenced Title 7 Chapter 2 funds, which traditionally included the funds for the Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) program. Mr. House stated that number 1 indicated there were 178,000 blind and visually impaired seniors

in Arizona and inquired whether that figure was the number of blind and visually impaired individuals in the state. Amy Porterfield agreed and stated there were approximately 78,000 blind and visually impaired seniors, which was 40% of the population. Ed House stated his recollection that the Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) had the demographics of blind and visually impaired population from 2017 that the committee could use. Amy Porterfield stated she would check on that statistic and reference it in the Fact Sheet. Ed House inquired whether the Fact Sheet would include the funding that was requested. Amy Porterfield stated the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) held their Seminar Day at the Capitol and requested \$500,000. She noted the NFBA met with the Head of the Appropriations Committee, who indicated that she would champion the inclusion of the additional \$500,000. Amy Porterfield stated the council could request that amount as well or request additional funding. Bob Kresmer stated the Fact Sheet would be shared with the Governor, who had already developed the budget. Mr. Kresmer stated the council could request support for the budget line item being included in the budget. Amy Porterfield stated that she, Donald Porterfield, and Bob Kresmer met with Christina Corieri, Senior Policy Advisor to the Governor, who encouraged the council to advocate with the Legislature. Ed House stated his recollection that in previous years, additional funding was added as a bill and not as part of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) budget proposal. Amy Porterfield stated her understanding that the funding could potentially be added to the budget, although the item could also be introduced as a bill. Ed House suggested the council also include the number of individuals being served annually, which Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) could obtain. Amy Porterfield stated the council had that number from September. Ms. Porterfield stated she would also like to know the total number of individuals waiting for any services, such as Orientation and Mobility (O&M) or Assistive Technology (AT) training. Ed House agreed that the council would want to include the total number of individuals on the wait list, which Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) would maintain. Bob Kresmer stated that approximately 139 individuals were on the wait list and inquired whether that should be included in the Fact Sheet. Ed House stated that contractors and state agencies would not seek more individuals than they could serve, and the number of individuals on the wait list could be smaller compared to the number of individuals that needed the services. Amy Porterfield stated the Legislature was requesting the number of individuals on the wait list, although the Fact Sheet could include the number of individuals that would benefit from services. Amy Porterfield stated the last number reported to the council was 101 individuals on the ILB wait list, although there were more individuals that might have received IL services, but were waiting for O&M instruction. Bob Kresmer stated the Fact Sheet could also indicate that many individuals had fallen off the wait list because that waited so long. Ted

Chittenden stated if there was no case finding, then there was no outreach to blind and visually impaired individuals that were not aware of the services.

Ed House inquired whether the first paragraph should include that the IL program funding was cut over the years. Amy Porterfield inquired whether the council could obtain the exact number from RSA. Ed House stated there would be an Annual Blindness Report that would include the local Title funding received. Mr. House stated the council should only include that information if it would be well received. Amy Porterfield stated that RSA was able to obtain funding from other areas, and she was unsure regarding the ramifications of including that actual number. Bob Kresmer agreed and stated the council should not guess on any of the statistics. Amy Porterfield stated that Christina Corieri would also check the information for accuracy. Ed House stated that even if the information was not included, the council would benefit from knowing the funding amounts. Brian Dulude stated he made the request to the RSA Data Unit, and he would follow up on that information. Ed House stated the Fact Sheet also did not include the nursing home costs, although Brian Dulude could likely obtain that information. Brian Dulude stated he supported the ILB increase, which would be utilized effectively. He noted there were problems with the ILB program, and many individuals were not able to receive the services that they needed. Brian Dulude stated that current staff were not able to provide the necessary services, and he was in the process of reclassifying positions so that qualified staff could provide those services. Amy Porterfield stated that if Brian Dulude had difficulty obtaining that information, the council would suggest putting pressure on RSA management to request that information. Bob Kresmer stated he had advised Brian Dulude regarding some of the areas that the ILB Workgroup would be working on so that he would be prepared. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the committee could obtain the average nursing home cost via an Internet search. Ed House stated the committee could obtain the average cost that the Division of Aging and Adult Services could provide as well as the average cost to the public. Brian Dulude stated he would investigate that as well. Amy Porterfield inquired whether a committee member would be willing to contact the Area on Aging regarding the nursing home costs. George Martinez requested clarification regarding the data the committee was seeking. Ed House stated there would be an official budget, which would differ from the actual costs to individuals, which would vary. Amy Porterfield suggested that George Martinez contact the Area on Aging, Region 1 for Maricopa County. Mr. Martinez stated he would make that inquiry. Bob Kresmer stated Christina Corieri indicated the council was not in a hurry to submit the Fact Sheet, due to the budget process time. Amy Porterfield stated that once the Fact Sheet was complete, the committee would submit the document to the Full Council

for approval at the next meeting in March. Bob Kresmer suggested the Fact Sheet be submitted to the council members as a separate document to the Full Council members.

Ed House stated that in the past, the Department of Economic Security (DES) had detailed reports from all programs that offered blindness services. He noted that the council would benefit from knowing information from other programs when discussing items with the Legislature. Amy Porterfield stated the council had not requested detailed information due to the service thresholds. Amy Porterfield stated that several years prior, DES developed thresholds, which were the average cost of every service provided, which were quite low. Amy Porterfield stated the council had advocated for the removal of that information and noted that language was changed in the policy. She noted that she was reluctant to request detailed information because she was unsure how that information was pulled. Bob Kresmer stated his understanding that a counselor could spend a certain amount on client case costs before requiring supervisor approval. Mr. Kresmer stated he made suggestions to Brian Dulude on how he reported information to the council, such as the number of new VR clients. Brian Dulude stated he compared the Data Report from September of 2019 to the previous year, which indicated there were 232 new VR clients in 2018 and 231 by the end of 2019, which was not a great difference. He noted he also compared the number from 2017 to 2018, which was a drop of about 50 individuals. Amy Porterfield stated her understanding that the threshold changed the way that money was spent, and her concern was the potential impact of that information. Ed House agreed and suggested the Fact Sheet include a reference that VR would provide services to as many individuals as possible. Amy Porterfield agreed that the council supported providing services to most individuals, and noted VR was interested in keeping the wait list low as well as case costs. Bob Kresmer suggested that any information or data that was included be accurate.

Policy and Legislation Discussion

Amy Porterfield stated the NFBA was had also advocated for an amendment to Braille Literacy to include UEB. Ms. Porterfield stated the NFBA also advocated that O&M instructors have the ACVREP or the NPBPC certifications. Amy Porterfield stated the council inquired whether the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) hired teachers with the NPBPC certification, and noted the agency only hired individuals with the ACVREP according to state statute. Amy Porterfield stated the council was unable to find any mention of the certifications required in statute, only that individuals must be qualified. Amy Porterfield stated the proposed bill would include all the certifications that would be accepted. She noted her

understanding that the bill had been dropped and she would share that information with the committee. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the council would encourage the Governor to take a stand on the issue. Amy Porterfield suggested the council review the bill language, although she did not anticipate any issues. Ted Chittenden inquired whether individuals would be required to have all the certifications or either of the certifications. Amy Porterfield stated the bill would indicate that individuals could have either of the certifications. Amy Porterfield stated the NFBA was also advocating for an update to the Accessible Voting Law and noted that a striker bill could be dropped.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Legislative and Public Policy Committee TBD. Agenda items are as follows:

- ILB Funding Increase Discussion
- Policy/Legislative Discussion

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

A call to the public was made with no response's forthcoming.

Adjournment of Meeting

Bob Kresmer moved to adjourn the meeting. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 pm.